Report of the Accreditation Visiting Team

## South Summit Middle School 355 East 300 South Kamas, Utah 84036

**February 17, 2005** 





Utah State Office of Education 250 East 500 South P.O. Box 144200 Salt Lake City, Utah 84114-4200

# THE REPORT OF THE VISITING TEAM REVIEWING

## South Summit Middle School 355 East 300 South Kamas, Utah 84036

**February 17, 2005** 

## UTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION

Patti Harrington, Ed.D.
State Superintendent of Public Instruction

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#### **FOREWORD**

The major purpose of the accreditation process is to stimulate school growth and improvement so as to increase student achievement.

In these efforts, the school staff makes a comprehensive evaluation of the school's programs, operations, and results. The school determines how actual practices align to stated objectives and resulting outcomes. It is a three-phased evaluation: (1) self-evaluation, (2) on-site evaluation by an external team of educators, and (3) implementation using units of the evaluation to improve the school by effecting thoughtful change.

The evaluation, February 17, 2005, was conducted because of the school's desire to ensure quality education for all students in the school, and to increase student achievement.

The entire staff of South Summit Middle School is commended for the time and effort devoted to studying and evaluating the various facets of the total program and to preparing the materials used by the Visiting Team. The excellent leadership given by Principal Barry Walker is also commended.

The staff and administration are congratulated for their desire for excellence at South Summit Middle School, and also for the professional attitude of all members of the group, which made it possible for them to see areas of weakness and strength and to suggest procedures for bringing about improvements.

While these recommendations may be used to solicit financial support to acquire some of the materials, equipment, and services needed to carry out a more effective program, it is even more important that the faculty and administration utilize them as they continue to evaluate and modify course offerings and administrative and classroom procedures to more dramatically increase student achievement at South Summit Middle School.

Patti Harrington, Ed.D. State Superintendent of Public Instruction

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<sup>\*</sup>Board of Regents Appointments

## SOUTH SUMMIT SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Louise Willoughby	Supervisor, Elementary Education			

## SOUTH SUMMIT MIDDLE SCHOOL

## **ADMINISTRATION AND STAFF**

### **School Administration**

Barry Walker		Principal
		_
	Counseling	
Antoine Powell		Counselor

## **Support Staff**

Merry Hoyt (Secretary) Jeff Lewis (Custodian) Sheri K. Wilde (Half Day Secretary) Lisa Mitchell (Lunch Worker) Linda Russell (Special Ed. Aide) Jeri Sue Clegg (Media Aide) Tami Clegg (Lunch Worker) Tami Shirley (Custodian) Jody Snelgrove (ISS/Afternoon School) Gale Evans (Sev. Handicapped Aide) Sandra Galovich (District Nurse) Teri Wilkinson (Severely Handicapped Shauna Gines (Custodian) Aide) Rebecca Jensen (Special Ed. Aide) Nick Wilkinson (Summit County Peggy Kanaphus (After School Tutoring Sheriff's Department School Liaison Program) Officer) Audrey Kanaphus (After School Tutoring Program) \*All positions are part-time except for

# Mrs. Hoyt.

### **Faculty**

Annie Lambert (Special Ed. Aide)

Dave Barton	Amy Hafets	Vicki Nichols
Cindy Butterfield	Chip Hayes	Wyoma Porath
Paula Carlson	Cheryl Hodgkinson	Glade Prescott
Darlene Clegg	Kerry Lambert	Janet Thacker
Jeanette Cox	Dave Louder	Tamyra Williams
Kathy Dale	David Matheny	Darwin Woolstenhulme
Sandy Embry	Cindy Mitchell	

## SOUTH SUMMIT MIDDLE SCHOOL MISSION STATEMENT

Search that we may know. Share that we may grow. Serve that we may heal. Smile that we may feel.

#### **BELIEF STATEMENTS**

We believe as a school community that:

- Continuing education will help us better know who we are and the unique talents each of us possess.
- Sharing knowledge and talent is essential to continued growth.
- Service will help heal ourselves and others.
- Humor and fun are basic to a healthy productive life.

It is the staff's responsibility to...

- Provide and present curriculum in a way students will want to learn.
- Be role models for our students, parents, and the community.
- Maintain rigorous academic instruction in collaboration with other teachers.
- Be professional, earnest, sincere, and do the best job possible each day.
- Have good attitudes about what we are doing.
- Teach that "learning is fun."

It is the student's responsibility to...

- Accept their roles as students by coming to school each day ready to learn.
- Achieve individual, class, and school goals.
- Accept the consequences of their choices.

It is the community's responsibility to...

• Support the school by providing resources and services that strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning.

## MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Greg Proffit, Ecker Hill Middle, Park City School District, Visiting Team Chairperson

Willa Jamieson, Eisenhower Junior High, Granite School District

Susie Preston, Ecker Hill Middle, Park City School District

JoAnn Stagg, Matheson Junior High, Granite School District

#### VISITING TEAM REPORT

#### SOUTH SUMMIT MIDDLE SCHOOL

**CHAPTER 1: SCHOOL PROFILE** 

South Summit Middle School has been open for 25 years. It currently enrolls 305 students in grades 6, 7, and 8. The school employs one principal, one counselor who has multiple assignments, two secretaries, nineteen teachers, and three aides. Students are grouped with a core of teachers at 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> grades.

Over the past four years there has been a gradual increase in enrollment. The school's population is predominately white, with a generally increasing enrollment of ELL students. For the past five years student attendance has been at 95 percent and above.

The school employs the Love and Logic approach to student discipline, and uses a database to track yearly disciplinary actions by category (policy infractions, harassment, educational effort, violence). A fully functioning Student Court and Peer Mediation program is in place and fully functional. Student Court data is tracked and graphed.

The school's vigilance in recording and maintaining student data is noteworthy.

a) What significant findings were revealed by the school's analysis of its profile?

South Summit Middle School's self-study resulted in three adopted action plans and a number of other "tabled" goals. Action Plan 1 calls for increased teacher collaboration and more cross-curricular instruction. Action Plan 2 outlines steps proposed and taken to improve students' reading comprehension across the core areas of English, science, social studies, and math. Action Plan 3 outlines the school's plans to increase communication and understanding within the school and community. By engaging in the self-study, South Summit Middle School has identified these needs and created action plans to address the needs. It should be noted that all three plans are aligned with the school's adopted desired results for student learning (DRSLs). Other goals from the self-study have been recorded and are being "warehoused" by the school principal and members of the school community.

b) What modifications to the school profile should the school consider for the future?

It should be noted that the school improvement plan (SIP) profile contains extensive historical quantitative data reflected in numerous tables and charts. The Visiting Team recommends that the school consider breaking out selected pieces

of data into more manageable portions for public consumption and making rubrics available. The school may also wish to reconsider the decision to report Criterion-Referenced Test (CRT) scores in comparison to other Utah middle schools. CRTs measure progress against a curriculum standard rather than against other schools whose goals, populations, and outcomes may be very different from those of South Summit Middle School.

## **Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry:**

- The Visiting Team recommends that the school consider examining a spectrum of inclusive placements for special education students.
- The Visiting Team suggests that the school research additional assessment tools for frequent monitoring of identified students' reading achievement.
- The Visiting Team encourages the school to continue with informal training and to seek formal training for teachers in grade level teaming and creating collaborative interdisciplinary units of instruction.

#### **CHAPTER 2: THE SELF-STUDY PROCESS**

- a) To what extent has the school community engaged in a collaborative self-study process on behalf of students?
  - The Visiting Team concurs that the school has fully engaged in a broad-based self-study aimed at increasing positive results for all students. Constituent representatives from student, parent, teacher, and community groups met often to refine the school's mission and beliefs. Members of all groups expressed their feeling that the process was open and evolving, centered on school actions that are intended to create student success. One parent summed up this feeling: "What we say and think is of value."
- b) To what extent does the school's self-study accurately reflect the school's current strengths and limitations?
  - The school's self-study is an accurate reflection of the school as it is open and operating today. Teacher after teacher relayed an understanding that changes are being implemented, that evidence is being gathered, and that corrections are being made. The school's use of data facilitates this action research model.

## CHAPTER 3: INSTRUCTIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

South Summit Middle School's desired results for student learning (DRSLs) are as follows:

- 1. Competent Communicator
- 2. Complex Thinker
- 3. Continuous Learner
- 4. Courageous Collaborator
- 5. Competent Citizen

### Shared Vision, Beliefs, Mission, and Goals:

- a) To what extent did the school facilitate a collaborative process to build a shared vision for the school (mission) that defines a compelling purpose and direction for the school?
  - The Visiting Team concludes that South Summit Middle School engaged in a purposeful, iterative process to define itself, its mission, and its beliefs. Unsatisfied with a typical lengthy mission statement that lacked meaning, the school followed a refinement process until reaching a mission statement easily understood and remembered by all: "Search...share...serve...smile." The Visiting Team found a great deal of evidence to suggest broad-based participation in the shared vision process.
- b) To what extent has the school defined a set of beliefs that reflect the commitment of the administration and staff to support student achievement and success?
  - Belief statements clearly outline staff, student, and community responsibilities. The commitment to enact these beliefs is outlined in the multi-year action plans established for the school.
- c) To what extent do the school's mission and beliefs align to support the school's desired results for student learning (DRSLs)?
  - Belief and mission statements are in alignment with the DRSLs. Competent communicators share their ideas with others. Complex thinkers and continuous learners search for meaning. Courageous collaborators share their experiences and serve to benefit a mutual purpose. Competent citizens serve with a smile.

## **Curriculum Development:**

a) To what extent does the staff work collaboratively to ensure the curriculum is based on clearly defined standards and the Utah Core Curriculum (with inclusion of the Utah Life Skills)?

Each department has developed its curriculum according to the standards set forth by the state. The DRSLs have been put in place as a foundation for the improvement plan for each department. Each department has aligned its goals and objectives to meet the standards. There is honest evaluation showing test scores and analyzing student performance. From these findings, recommendations have been made to improve student learning. From these recommendations, useful action plans have been set up to continue the school's improvement plan.

b) To what extent does the teaching staff work collaboratively to support the development of a curriculum that focuses on the school's desired results for student learning?

Teaming is used and seen as a valuable tool to collaborate and develop the curriculum. The staff is aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the students' performance. All teachers are working together to develop skills where they are needed most. By teaching across the curriculum, teachers are able to have an impact on student learning by making students see and understand the value of education. Involving students in decision making helps students understand the importance of problem solving and being a lifetime learner. The Visiting Team found evidence in classroom observations and interviews with students and teachers that the DRSLs are being used as a strong foundation in driving the curriculum.

### **Quality Instructional Design:**

a) To what extent does the professional staff design and implement a variety of learning experiences that actively engage students?

Through classroom visits and teacher interviews it is apparent that teachers at South Summit use a variety of learning strategies in their classrooms. Hands-on, active learning is happening in many of the classes. Teachers are utilizing unique and engaging methods to review material and practice skills. Technology is embedded within many classroom activities. The work being done by the 8<sup>th</sup> grade team to develop and implement cross-curricular projects is particularly effective in engaging students in their learning. Rewards exist for student achievement through programs such as the honor roll, Cat Pride, and Focus on Excellence.

b) To what extent does the professional staff employ a variety of instructional strategies to ensure the needs of different learners are met?

A variety of instructional strategies are being employed in response to varied learning levels and styles. Strategies being implemented in the classroom include group work and active participation in hands-on projects. The morning reading program has been adopted to increase performance for students at all ability levels. Student committees were formed to give feedback to teachers about instructional strategies. When questioned, students felt that their feedback resulted in positive changes in the classrooms.

c) To what extent do the professional staff and leadership provide additional opportunities which support student learning?

The Visiting Team found many programs in place to support student learning. An after-school mentoring/tutoring program exists to help students identified by their teachers. Teachers are available before and after school, during lunch, by e-mail, and by phone for students to receive extra help. State science fair opportunities exist, and there are service projects available for student participation. Other school- and community-sponsored programs include the Student Court Leadership Team, intramural sports, and the Skills Streaming class.

## **Quality Assessment Systems:**

a) To what extent has the staff developed classroom or school-wide assessments based on clearly articulated expectations for student achievement?

Students are aware of learning expectations, and teachers employ a variety of assessment tools. Disclosure statements of goals and objectives are distributed, and the purpose of assessments and evaluations is made clear to all students and parents. Some examples of assessments used include pre- and post-tests, teacher check-ins, class discussions, self-evaluations, portfolios, and students teaching other students.

b) To what extent are assessments of student learning developed using methods that reflect the intended purpose and performance standards?

Methods of assessment reflect the type of learning in the classroom. The Core Curriculum established by the state is being followed, and assessments vary according to the material being covered. Examples include students using self-assessment to evaluate their work and the procedures they followed, and students working collaboratively to learn information and in turn teach it to others in their class.

c) To what extent are assessments designed, developed, and used in a fair and equitable manner?

Teachers are aware of, and guided by, student differences in the development of assessment tools. Teachers work to develop and implement tools that will accurately reflect the abilities of all their students. In addition to midterm and end-of-term reports, PowerSchool can be accessed by parents and students to monitor progress and achievement. Results of standardized tests such as CRTs and SATs are sent home to parents as well. Assessment results are utilized to improve programs and instruction.

## **Leadership for School Improvement:**

a) To what extent does the school leadership promote quality instruction by fostering an academic learning climate and actively supporting teaching and learning?

The Visiting Team found that the school principal is actively involved in various roles, promoting quality instruction and fostering a climate where students, staff, and the community feel that they have ownership in the decision-making processes of the school. The principal takes the lead in reaching out to the community and involving parents and students in decisions that will have an effect on teaching and learning within the school. He has been instrumental in moving forward the discussion of the school community's needs and how they can best be addressed. Parents provide a very positive view of Mr. Walker and his involvement with the intramural programs, and with his visibility in the halls and outside drop-off zones. The staff is highly complimentary of his ability to understand and grasp curriculum needs, and to strive to provide the staff members with supplies, up-to-date materials, and the support needed to foster learning in their classrooms.

b) To what extent does the school leadership employ effective decision making that is data-driven, research-based, and collaborative?

The Visiting Team found ample data to show what the school has done in the past and what is currently being done. This information has been shared with stakeholders to better enable them to make decisions based on that data. Needs have been assessed and goals have been established to fulfill those needs. The goals appear to have a good research base, and have apparently been decided upon through collaboration between groups, under the guidance of the principal. Each of the stakeholder groups voiced that they were well informed of the data before they ever made any decisions or created an action plan.

c) To what extent does the school leadership monitor progress in student achievement and instructional effectiveness through a comprehensive assessment system and continuous reflection?

A huge amount of data has been gathered, including various tables and graphs, as well as information about student demographics and the general overall

community surrounding the school. The school staff and leadership meet often and discuss the results of the various types of assessment that are being implemented within the school. In addition to the traditional end-of-year CRTs, pre- and post-testing is occurring in many of the subject areas, as well as daily and authentic assessments. Portfolios and projects that cross the curriculum are being used and encouraged. Projects, group work, and hands-on activities are also occurring within the classes. Many members of the staff are working in teams that meet to collaborate and reflect on what works and what does not.

d) To what extent does the school leadership provide skillful stewardship by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources of the school for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment?

The Visiting Team found that organizational and reflective groups of parents, students, and staff were formed to ensure that all needs were being met and/or addressed. Several of these groups have become self-sustaining and are continuing with leadership roles in the goal-making and achievement process. The stewardship and facilitation provided by the school principal have allowed distributed leadership to thrive in support of a continuous learning community.

e) To what extent does the school leadership make decisions related to the allocation and use of resources which align with the school goals, the achievement of the DRSLs, and school improvement efforts?

The Visiting Team found evidence that the school has been responsive to the self-study findings and has made program changes as a result. For example, an examination of CORE scores revealed a need for additional support for reading. The school's bell schedule was changed to provide a daily 30-minute period for independent reading; materials have been purchased to support the reading period; and the school's action plan (p. 105) calls for teacher professional development teaching reading in the content areas.

f) To what extent does the school leadership empower the school community and encourage commitment, participation, collaboration, and shared responsibility for student learning?

From interviews and the SIP, the Visiting Team found that a facilitative and distributive model has been employed at South Summit Middle School. Teachers, parents, and students expressed an understanding that the goal of the accreditation process was to make school a better place, and to support greater and greater student learning. Many teachers, students, and parents were provided with leadership opportunities that allowed them to make long lasting changes in the school.

## **Community Building:**

a) To what extent does the school foster community building and working relationships within the school?

The school is an important part of the community, and the community is an important part of the school. There has been a great deal of collaboration between the two to develop a school improvement plan. The community has been asked from the very beginning to express needs, and has seen the school respond in a very quick, decisive, positive way. There are many programs in place that have been jointly developed by the community and school, such as the recreational programs, outreach program, and parenting classes. The recreational center has been a collaborative effort between the two. The community expresses an appreciation toward the leadership and professionalism of the faculty and staff.

b) To what extent does the school extend the school community through collaborative networks that support student learning?

Students have had the opportunity to be involved in the process of creating a learning environment. The student council members have interviewed their peers and have made recommendations. These have been implemented by the school and community. The community is actively involved with the school, providing after-school activities supported by both community and school.

## **Culture of Continuous Improvement and Learning:**

a) To what extent does the school build skills and the capacity for improvement through comprehensive and ongoing professional development programs focused on the school's goals for improvement?

The Visiting Team noted evidence that the school understands the importance of professional development to meaningful change. The Reading Action Plan (p.105 of the SIP) calls for professional development support for teaching reading in the content area. Professional materials are being provided, and teachers are offered support in obtaining the Utah State Reading Endorsement. There is evidence suggesting that focused, ongoing professional development is planned or taking place.

b) To what extent does the school create conditions that support productive change and continuous improvement?

The Visiting Team found evidence of a school environment that supports the collaborative and inquisitive reflection that is necessary for continuous improvement. Grade level teams indicated that they were meeting regularly to plan curriculum and instruction. The principal noted that faculty meeting agendas

are planned to include matters of curriculum, instruction, and professional development.

# CHAPTER 4: NORTHWEST ASSOCIATION OF ACCREDITED SCHOOLS (NAAS) STANDARDS I-XI

## Standard I – Educational Program

This standard is met. South Summit Middle School's instructional and organizational practices, as well as its policies and procedures, support the desired results for student learning and prepare students to succeed in a culturally diverse, democratic society.

### Standard II - Student Personnel Services

This standard is met. Student personnel services are designed to give systematic assistance to students. The number of assigned personnel for guidance includes a minimum of one full-time person for each 400 students enrolled.

## Standard III – School Plant and Equipment

This standard is met. The school plant provides for a variety of instructional activities and programs, and incorporates aesthetic features that contribute to a positive educational atmosphere.

## Standard IV – Library Media Program

This standard is met. The school library media program is a primary resource for literacy, information, and curriculum support. A certified library media teacher provides instruction, resources, and activities to promote independent use of ideas and information.

## Standard V - Records

This standard is met. Student records are maintained, handled, and protected in the best interest of students and parents. Students and parents have the right to access personal student records and are ensured the privacy of such, as guaranteed by federal legislation.

#### Standard VI – School Improvement (This is addressed in the self-study.)

This standard is met. The school improvement plan focuses on the total school rather than each of the separate components within the school.

## Standard VII - Preparation of Personnel

This standard is met. All professional personnel are in compliance with the licensing requirements of the state of Utah and are properly endorsed for the subjects they are assigned.

#### Standard VIII - Administration

This standard is met. The administration of South Summit Middle School provides educational leadership, supervises and coordinates programs, and carries out the necessary administrative procedures.

#### Standard IX - Teacher Load

This standard is met. The total number of students instructed by any one teacher in any one grading period does not exceed numbers set by the Utah State Office of Education and/or Northwest.

#### Standard X – Activities

This standard is met. South Summit Middle School supports a range of activities that supplement the basic instructional program by providing additional interests and opportunities for learning to take place.

#### **Standard XI – Business Practices**

This standard is met. The school is financially responsible. Proper budgetary procedures and generally accepted accounting principles are followed for all school funds. The school's advertising and promotional literature are completely truthful and ethical.

#### CHAPTER 5: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS – ACTION PLAN

a) To what extent is the school-wide action plan adequate in addressing the critical areas for follow-up?

The school has embraced both the spirit and the letter of the self-study process, including the composition of three specific action plans (pp. 10x - 1xx). The action plan address steps to be taken, timelines, and persons responsible. The school may consider identifying necessary funding and sources of funding.

b) To what extent is there sufficient commitment to the action plan, school-wide and system-wide?

The Visiting Team concurs that the full school community supports the self-improvement journey undertaken at South Summit Middle School. School board members, parents, administrator, teachers, and students all showed their support for the work underway at South Summit Middle School.

c) How sound does the follow-up process that the school intends to use for monitoring the accomplishments of the school-wide action plan appear to be?

Given the leadership and commitment of current school principal, Barry Walker, the Visiting Team is very confident that the program for monitoring accomplishments will be specific and success-oriented. All members of the school community expressed awareness and support for the direction outlined in the South Summit Middle School Improvement Plan.

## CHAPTER 6: MAJOR COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VISITING TEAM

### **Commendations:**

- The Visiting Team notes that school principal Barry Walker is to be recognized as a central figure in the school's self-study and improvement process. Mr. Walker is involved, proactive, and central to the school's improvement process. Many in the school community mentioned Principal Walker's support of students and teachers. The Visiting Team commends Mr. Walker for all his work on behalf of the students, teachers, and parents of South Summit Middle School.
- The faculty at South Summit Middle School is also to be commended. The Visiting Team took note of a variety of instructional strategies such as integrating technology, kinesthetic learning, project-based instruction, and guided reading. Parents and students expressed that the school's teachers were responsive to needs assessments, making changes as needed during the course of the self-study.
- The Visiting Team found great evidence of a thriving school-community link, a connection that supports student success. Elements of the school and community were found to be interchangeable, and the students benefit greatly. Students attending South Summit Middle School are very lucky to be surrounded by such a supportive and integrated learning environment.

### **Recommendations:**

- The Visiting Team recommends that South Summit Middle School continue with the development of the school's grade level teams. Study the philosophy and practices presented by the National Middle School Association and others. Engage in collective goal setting, teambuilding, and other collegial practices. Set aside regularly scheduled time for teams to meet: Provide this necessary platform so that teachers may focus on issues of curriculum, instruction, and assessment.
- Find ways to use the vast wealth of data collected at the school. Translate this information into meaningful documents that can be used to support teachers' instruction, inform students about progress, and communicate to others about the success of the school.
- Continue to develop and reinforce the utilization of the independent reading period. The Visiting Team encourages the school to understand that independent reading alone will not guarantee student success, but instructional strategies to aid comprehension will. Provide professional development for teaching reading in the content area. The pursuit of Utah Reading Endorsements is a worthy goal.
- In addition to school-wide literacy efforts, the Visiting Team recommends that teachers pursue the State of Utah ELL endorsement. The Visiting Team encourages the school district to provide training for all teachers in differentiated instruction and instructional strategies that support second-language learners.